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C O N F I D E N T I A L AIT TAIPEI 000686

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INTERIOR FOR USGS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2010  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [SENV](#) [EMIN](#) [KNNP](#) [TW](#)  
SUBJECT: GEOLOGICAL SURVEY'S NEW ROLE: MAPPING AND  
CONSULTANCY

Classified By: AIT ACTING DIRECTOR DAVID KEEGAN REASON 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) Summary: Now that Taiwan has exhausted most of its mining resources, the Central Geological Survey spends most of its resources on mapping the island. However, the Survey still conducts some mining surveys and has a major role in providing expert geologic advice for construction projects in this earthquake-prone island, including where to place low-level nuclear waste. End Summary.

FROM SEARCHING FOR MINERALS TO MAPPING  
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¶2. (U) On Feb 15, AIT visited Taiwan's Central Geological Survey, a technical agency housed in the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA), and discussed with Director General Lin Chao-Chung the Survey's responsibilities and functions. The Survey was founded in 1978 and currently has a staff of 160, including about 50 geologists. Lin said that mining surveys had been the main pursuit of their work in the past but that as mining resources have been exhausted, the main focus had shifted to mapping the island. He acknowledged that because two thirds of the island is mountainous it is a big challenge to complete the mapping (at the scale 1:50,000 or 15-minutes). (Note: The U.S. Geological Survey produces its survey maps in 7.5 minute units. End note.) Besides mapping, the Survey also assists in substrate studies when major public projects are planned, such as dams, buildings and bridges. The survey maintains a core-drill sample library which is useful to identify water-bearing strata in chronically water-short Taiwan.

¶3. (C) Currently, one of the secondary tasks of the Survey is the identification of exploitable beds of dolomite, used as a catalyst in the processing of iron, marble for building stone and limestone as an ingredient for cement. Lin said Taiwan's plans for buying or investing in overseas mining concerns to counter China's aggressive moves in that area were hampered due to the lack of diplomatic relations. He added that sending geologists to do surveys requires official agreements which Taiwan finds difficult to obtain. He said that the Chinese Petroleum Corporation had primary responsibility for procuring oil and gas for Taiwan and it is in the forefront in the search for energy resources.

ENERGY FOR THE FUTURE: GAS HYDRATE

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14. (U) Director Lin mentioned that gas hydrate, a solidified form of natural gas that occurs deep in the ocean floor offers a future energy option for Taiwan. The Survey is conducting studies of the seabed surrounding Taiwan to identify sources for gas hydrate. However, because it is in highly volatile form and typically occurs in deep ocean deposits the technology to profitably exploit gas hydrate has yet to be developed. The closest deposits are found in the South China Sea continental shelf and offshore of SW Taiwan. Lin said that the reserves of gas hydrate in the world are huge and may play an important role in supplying energy this century.

SITES FOR DISPOSAL OF LOW LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE  
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15. (C) AIT asked about the survey's involvement in finding suitable sites for the disposal of nuclear waste. Lin said that the Survey was very active in the searching for such sites but lamented that every time they identified a suitable site that met geologic and environmental requirements, protests would ensue. Director Lin voiced strong support for nuclear energy saying that only when electrical appliances stop working due to a shortage of electricity will people appreciate having nuclear power plants.

16. (C) Comment: The role of the Survey is much diminished from when mining was still a strong component of its mission. However, on an island where earthquakes are common the Survey is still the repository of expertise that is utilized for all major construction projects.

KEEGAN